Western Asia and Egypt 3500–500 B.C.

Key Events
As you read, look for the key events in the history of Southwest Asia and Egypt.
• The Sumerians in Mesopotamia were among the first groups to build a civilization, and they were the first to develop a system of writing.
• Due in large part to the Nile, early Egyptian civilization was stable and prosperous. Massive monuments, the pyramids, were built to honor the deaths of the pharaohs.
• The Israelites emerged as a distinct people.
• Of the other empires that came into being in Southwest Asia, the longest lasting and most powerful were the Assyrian and Persian Empires.

The Impact Today
The events that occurred during this time period still impact our lives today.
• The peoples of Mesopotamia and Egypt built cities and struggled with the problems of organized government.
• The Israelites developed a major world religion, which influenced the development of Christianity and Islam and has a continuing effect on Western civilization.

World History Video The Chapter 2 video, “Egypt,” chronicles the rise of Egyptian civilization.
970 B.C.  
Solomon becomes King of Israel

539 B.C.  
Babylonia falls

521 B.C.  
Darius begins to expand Persian Empire

Death mask of King Tutankhamen of Egypt

King Solomon’s temple in Jerusalem

The Great Sphinx and the Great Pyramids at Giza, Egypt, symbolize the power and longevity of Egyptian kingdoms.

HISTORY Online

Chapter Overview
Visit the Glencoe World History Web site at wh.glencoe.com and click on Chapter 2—Chapter Overview to preview chapter information.
In the winter of 1849, a daring young Englishman made a difficult journey into the deserts and swamps of southern Iraq. He moved south down the banks of the river Euphrates while braving high winds and temperatures that reached 120 degrees Fahrenheit (48.9° C). The man, William Loftus, led a small expedition in search of the roots of civilization. As he said, “From our childhood we have been led to regard this place as the cradle of the human race.”

Guided by native Arabs into the southernmost reaches of Iraq, Loftus and his small group of explorers were soon overwhelmed by what they saw. He wrote, “I know of nothing more exciting or impressive than the first sight of one of these great piles, looming in solitary grandeur from the surrounding plains and marshes.”

One of these “piles” was known to the natives as the mound of Warka. The mound contained the ruins of the ancient city of Uruk, one of the first real cities in the world and part of one of the world’s first civilizations. Southern Iraq, known to ancient peoples as Mesopotamia, was one of four areas in the world where civilization began.

**Why It Matters**

In the fertile river valleys of Mesopotamia, Egypt, India, and China, intensive farming made it possible to support large groups of people. The people in these regions were able to develop the organized societies that we associate with civilization. The beginnings of Western civilization lie in the early civilizations of Southwest Asia and Egypt.

**History and You**

As you read this chapter, analyze the climatic conditions in Mesopotamia that favored certain crops. Compare Mesopotamia’s climate and crops to the climate and crops that were grown in the Nile Valley of Egypt. What conclusions can you draw from this information?
Main Ideas
- Mesopotamia, one of the first civilizations, began between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.
- The Sumerians formed city-states and created forms of communication that affect our lives today.

Key Terms
- city-state, ziggurat, theocracy, empire, patriarchal, polytheistic, cuneiform

Preview of Events
- 3000 B.C.: Sumerians establish independent cities
- 2340 B.C.: Akkadians set up the first empire
- 2100 B.C.: Akkadian Empire falls
- 1792 B.C.: Hammurabi comes to power

Guide to Reading

People to Identify
- Sumerians, Akkadians, Sargon, Hammurabi

Places to Locate
- Tigris River, Euphrates River, Mesopotamia, Fertile Crescent, Uruk, Babylon

Preview Questions
1. How did geography affect the civilizations in Mesopotamia?
2. How did the Akkadian Empire begin?

Reading Strategy
Categorizing Information
As you read this section, complete a chart like the one shown below to explain the Sumerians’ various contributions to civilization.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Life</th>
<th>Cultural Life</th>
<th>Inventions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Voices from the Past

The following poem reflects the deep despair of the people of Ur after the burning and sacking of their city:

"Ur is destroyed, bitter is its lament. The country’s blood now fills its holes like hot bronze in a mould. Bodies dissolve like fat in the sun. Our temple is destroyed, the gods have abandoned us, like migrating birds. Smoke lies on our city like a shroud."

—Legacy: The Search for Ancient Cultures, Michael Wood, 1995

Constant conflict marked early civilization in Mesopotamia. Invaders flowed into the flat land of the region, and city fought city for land and water.

The Impact of Geography
The ancient Greeks spoke of the valley between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers as Mesopotamia, the land “between the rivers.” Mesopotamia was at the eastern end of an area known as the Fertile Crescent, an arc of land from the Mediterranean Sea to the Persian Gulf. Because this land had rich soil and abundant crops, it was able to sustain an early civilization.

Mesopotamia was a region with little rain, but its soil had been enriched over the years by layers of silt—material deposited by the two rivers. In late spring, the Tigris and Euphrates often overflowed their banks and deposited their fertile silt. This flooding, however, depended on the melting of snows in the upland...
mountains where the rivers began. People in the valley could not tell exactly when the floods would come or how large they would be.

Because of these circumstances, farming in ancient Mesopotamia could be done only when people controlled the flow of the rivers. Irrigation and drainage ditches—part of a large-scale system of water control—made it possible to grow crops on a regular basis. The resulting abundance of food enabled large numbers of people to live together in cities and made possible the emergence of civilization in Mesopotamia.

When we speak of Mesopotamian civilization, we are referring to the achievements of several peoples. Ancient Mesopotamia includes three general areas: Assyria, Akkad, and Sumer. We focus first on the Sumerians, the creators of the first Mesopotamian civilization.

**Reading Check**

Explain what role did geography play in the development of Mesopotamian civilization?

**The City-States of Ancient Mesopotamia**

The origins of the Sumerian people remain a mystery. By 3000 B.C., they had established a number of independent cities in southern Mesopotamia, including Eridu, Ur, and Uruk. As the cities expanded, they came to have political and economic control over the
surrounding countryside. They formed city-states, the basic units of Sumerian civilization.

Sumerian Cities Sumerian cities were surrounded by walls. Uruk, for example, was encircled by a wall six miles (10 km) long with defense towers located along the wall every 30 to 35 feet (9 to 10 m). City dwellings, built of sun-dried bricks, included both the small houses of peasants and the larger buildings of the city officials, priests, and priestesses.

Although Mesopotamia had little stone or wood for building purposes, it did have plenty of mud. Mud bricks, easily shaped by hand, were left to bake in the hot sun until they were hard enough to use for building. People in Mesopotamia were remarkably creative with mud bricks. They invented the arch and the dome, and they built some of the largest brick buildings in the world. Mud bricks are still used in rural areas of Southwest Asia today.

Gods, Goddesses, and Rulers The most prominent building in a Sumerian city was the temple dedicated to the chief god or goddess of the city. This temple was often built atop a massive stepped tower called a ziggurat. The Sumerians believed that gods and goddesses owned the cities. The people devoted much of their wealth to building temples, as well as elaborate houses for the priests and priestesses who served the gods. The temples and related buildings served as the center of the city physically, economically, and even politically.

Priests and priestesses, who supervised the temples and their property, had a great deal of power. In fact, historians believe that in the early stages of the city-states, priests and priestesses played an important role in ruling. The Sumerians believed that the gods ruled the cities, making the state a theocracy—a government by divine authority. Eventually, however, ruling power passed into the hands of worldly figures, or kings.

Sumerians viewed kingship as divine in origin. Kings, they believed, derived their power from the gods and were the agents of the gods. As one person said in a petition to his king: “You in your judgement, you are the son of Anu [god of the sky]. Your commands, like the work of a god, cannot be reversed. Your words, like rain pouring down from heaven, are without number.”

Regardless of their origins, kings had power. They led armies, supervised the building of public works,
and organized workers for the irrigation projects on which Mesopotamian farming depended. The army, the government, and the priests and priestesses all aided the kings in their rule. As befitted their power, Sumerian kings, their wives, and their children lived in large palaces.

**Economy and Society** Although the economy of the Sumerian city-states was based chiefly on farming, trade and industry became important as well. The peoples of Mesopotamia were well known for their metalwork, but they also made woolen textiles and pottery. The Sumerians imported copper, tin, and timber in exchange for dried fish, wool, barley, wheat, and metal goods. Traders traveled by land to the eastern Mediterranean in the west and by sea to India in the east. The invention of the wheel, around 3000 B.C., led to wheeled carts, which made the transport of goods easier.

Sumerian city-states contained three major social groups: nobles, commoners, and slaves. Nobles included royal and priestly officials and their families. Commoners worked for palace and temple estates and as farmers, merchants, fishers, and craftspeople. Probably 90 percent or more of the people were farmers. Slaves belonged to palace officials, who used them mostly in building projects. Temple officials most often used female slaves to weave cloth and grind grain. Rich landowners also used slaves to farm their lands.

**Empires in Ancient Mesopotamia**

As the number of Sumerian city-states grew and the city-states expanded, new conflicts arose. City-state fought city-state for control of land and water. Located on the flat land of Mesopotamia, the Sumerian city-states were also open to invasion by other groups.

To the north of the Sumerian city-states were the Akkadians (uh•KAY•dee•uhnez). We call them a Semitic people because they spoke a Semitic language. Around 2340 B.C., Sargon, leader of the Akkadians, overran the Sumerian city-states and set up the first empire in world history. An **empire** is a large political unit or state, usually under a single leader, that controls many peoples or territories. Empires are often easy to create but difficult to maintain. The rise and fall of empires is an important part of history.

*The Royal Standard of Ur is a box, created about 2700 B.C., that depicts different Sumerian scenes. This panel shows a royal celebration following a military victory.*
Attacks from neighboring hill peoples eventually caused the Akkadian Empire to fall. Its end by 2100 B.C. brought a return to the system of warring city-states. It was not until 1792 B.C. that a new empire came to control much of Mesopotamia. Leadership came from Babylon, a city-state south of Akkad, where Hammurabi (HA•muh•RAH•bee) came to power. He gained control of Sumer and Akkad, thus creating a new Mesopotamian kingdom. After his death in 1750 B.C., however, a series of weak kings was unable to keep Hammurabi’s empire united, and it finally fell to new invaders.

\[\text{Reading Check} \quad \text{Evaluating Why was it so easy for Sargon and his army to invade the Sumerian city-states?}\]

**The Code of Hammurabi**

Hammurabi is remembered for his law code, a collection of 282 laws. Many of its ideas were similar to later Israelite codes.

For centuries, laws had regulated people’s relationships with one another in the lands of Mesopotamia. Hammurabi’s collection of laws provides considerable insight into social conditions in Mesopotamia.

The Code of Hammurabi was based on a system of strict justice. Penalties for criminal offenses were severe, and they varied according to the social class of the victim. A crime against a member of the upper class (a noble) by a member of the lower class (a commoner) was punished more severely than the same offense against a member of the lower class. Moreover, the principle of retaliation (“an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth”) was a fundamental part of this system of justice.

Hammurabi’s code took seriously the duties of public officials. Officials were expected to catch burglars. If they failed to do so, the officials in the district where the crime was committed had to replace the lost property. If murderers were not found, the officials had to pay a fine to the relatives of the murdered person. Judges could be fined or lose their positions for ruling incorrectly on a case.

The law code also included what we would call consumer protection laws. Builders were held responsible for the buildings they constructed. If a house collapsed and caused the death of the owner, the builder was put to death. If the collapse caused the death of the son of the owner, the son of the builder was put to death. If goods were destroyed, they had to be replaced and the house rebuilt at the builder’s expense.

The largest category of laws in the Code of Hammurabi focused on marriage and the family. Parents arranged marriages for their children. After marriage, the two parties signed a marriage contract. Without a contract, no one was considered legally married.

Society in ancient Mesopotamia was patriarchal—that is, Mesopotamian society was dominated by men. Hammurabi’s code makes it clear that women had far fewer privileges and rights in marriage than did men.

A woman’s place was definitely in the home. If she failed to fulfill her duties, her husband had legal grounds for divorce. In addition, if a wife was not able to bear children or tried to leave home to engage in business, her husband could divorce her. Even more harsh, a wife who was a “gadabout . . . neglecting her house [and] humiliating her husband,” could be drowned.

Fathers ruled their children as well as their wives. Obedience was expected: “If a son has struck his father, he shall cut off his hand.” If a son committed a serious enough offense, his father could disinherit him. Obviously, Hammurabi’s law code covered almost every aspect of people’s lives.

\[\text{Reading Check} \quad \text{Identifying Identify at least five aspects of Mesopotamian society as revealed by the Code of Hammurabi.}\]

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**People In History**

**Hammurabi**

Ruled 1792–1750 B.C.

Babylonian king

Hammurabi was justly proud of his famous code of laws. As he stated: “When Marduk [a Babylonian god] sent me to rule the people . . . I established law and justice in the land, and promoted the welfare of the people.” Hammurabi built temples and irrigation canals, encouraged trade, and brought an economic revival. Hammurabi was also a man of war. He had a well-disciplined army of foot soldiers who carried axes, spears, and copper or bronze daggers. Hammurabi divided his opponents and defeated them one by one. After his conquests, he called himself “the sun of Babylon, the king who has made the four quarters of the world subservient.”
The Importance of Religion

The physical environment strongly affected the way Mesopotamians viewed the world. Ferocious floods, heavy downpours, scorching winds, and oppressive humidity were all part of the Mesopotamian climate. These conditions, as well as famines, convinced Mesopotamians that this world was controlled by supernatural forces, which often were not kind or reliable. In the presence of nature, Mesopotamians could easily feel helpless, as this poem relates:

“The rampant flood which no man can oppose,
Which shakes the heavens and causes earth to
tremble,
In an appalling blanket folds mother and child,
And drowns the harvest in its time of ripeness.”

To the Mesopotamians, powerful spiritual beings—gods and goddesses—permeated all aspects of the universe. The Mesopotamians identified almost three thousand gods and goddesses. Mesopotamian religion was polytheistic because of this belief in many gods. Human beings were supposed to obey and serve the gods. According to Sumerian beliefs, human beings were created to do the manual labor the gods were unwilling to do for themselves. By their very nature, humans were inferior to the gods and could never be sure what the gods might do to help or hurt them.

Reading Check  Describing  What role did the physical environment play in the way Mesopotamians viewed the world?

The Creativity of the Sumerians

The Sumerians are credited with inventing the oldest writing system, cuneiform, which dates from about 3000 B.C.

The Sumerians created many inventions that still affect our lives today. Probably their greatest invention was their writing. In addition, historians credit them with many technological innovations.

Writing and Literature  Around 3000 B.C., the Sumerians created a cuneiform (“wedge-shaped”) system of writing. Using a reed stylus (a tool for writing), they made wedge-shaped impressions on clay tablets, which were then baked or dried in the sun. Once dried, these tablets lasted a very long time. Several hundred thousand tablets have been found.

They have been a valuable source of information for modern scholars.

Mesopotamian peoples used writing primarily for record keeping. Cuneiform texts, however, were also used in schools to train scribes, members of the learned class who served as copyists, teachers, and jurists.

For boys of the upper class in Mesopotamia, becoming a scribe was the key to a successful career. Men who began their careers as scribes became the leaders of their cities, temples, and armies. Scribes came to hold the most important positions in Sumerian society.

To become scribes, boys from wealthy families, many of them the sons of scribes, attended the new schools that were in operation by 2500 B.C. Young boys seeking to become scribes began school when they were small children and trained until they were young men. School days began at sunrise and ended at sunset. Discipline was harsh. The following essay, written by a teacher as a copying exercise for pupils, shows that punishments—being caned or beaten with a stick—were frequent:

42
In the tablet-house, the monitor said to me: “Why are you late?” I was afraid, my heart beat fast. I entered before my teacher, took my place. My “school-father” read my tablet to me, said, “The word is cut off,” caned me. He who was in charge of drawing said “Why when I was not here did you go out?” caned me. He who was in charge of the gate said “Why when I was not here did you go out?” caned me. My teacher said “Your hand is not good,” caned me.

Scribal students spent most of their school days following the same routine. They were taught by copying and recopying standard works on clay tablets and reciting from them. Although boring, this was probably the scribe’s only way of learning how to form the cuneiform writing signs neatly and correctly.

Writing was important because it allowed a society to keep records and to pass along knowledge from person to person and generation to generation. Writing also made it possible for people to communicate ideas in new ways. This is especially evident in The Epic of Gilgamesh.

Gilgamesh is a Mesopotamian epic poem that records the exploits of a legendary king named Gilgamesh. Gilgamesh is wise, strong, and perfect in body. He is part man and part god. Gilgamesh befriends a hairy beast named Enkidu. Together, they set off to do great deeds. When Enkidu dies, Gilgamesh feels the pain of death and begins a search for the secret of immortality. His efforts fail, and Gilgamesh remains mortal. This Mesopotamian epic makes clear that “everlasting life” is only for the gods.

Sumerian Technology The Sumerians invented several tools and devices that made daily life easier and more productive. They developed the wagon wheel, for example, to help transport people and goods from place to place. The potter’s wheel to shape containers, the sundial to keep time, and the arch used in construction are other examples of Sumerian technology. The Sumerians were the first to make bronze out of copper and tin, creating finely crafted metalwork. The Sumerians also made outstanding achievements in mathematics and astronomy. In math, they devised a number system based on 60. Geometry was used to measure fields and erect buildings. In astronomy, the Sumerians charted the heavenly constellations. A quick glance at your watch and its division into 60 minutes in an hour should remind you of our debt to the Sumerians.

Identification Name two major inventions of the Sumerians, and tell how those inventions affect our lives today.
Although there were earlier Mesopotamian law codes, the Code of Hammurabi is the most complete. The law code emphasizes the principle of retribution (“an eye for an eye”) and punishments that vary according to social status. Punishments could be severe, as these examples show.

22: If a man has committed highway robbery and has been caught, that man should be put to death.

23: If the highwayman has not been caught, the man that has been robbed shall state on oath what he has lost and the city or district governor in whose territory or district the robbery took place shall restore to him what he has lost.

25: If fire broke out in a free man’s house and a free man, who went to extinguish it, cast his eye on the goods of the owner of the house and has appropriated the goods of the owner of the house, that free man shall be thrown into that fire.

196: If a free man has destroyed the eye of a member of the aristocracy, they shall destroy his eye.

198: If he has destroyed the eye of a commoner or broken the bone of a commoner, he shall pay one mina of silver.

199: If he has destroyed the eye of a free man’s slave or broken the bone of a free man’s slave, he shall pay one-half his value.

229: If a builder constructed a house for a nobleman but did not make his work strong, with the result that the house which he built collapsed and so has caused the death of the owner of the house, that builder shall be put to death.

232: If it has destroyed goods, he shall make good whatever it destroyed; also, because he did not make the house strong that he built and it collapsed, he shall reconstruct the house that collapsed at his own expense.

—The Code of Hammurabi

Hammurabi’s code was written on a stone monument, approximately seven feet tall, called a stele. The upper section of the stele shows Hammurabi standing in front of the seated sun god.

Analyzing Primary Sources

1. Explain the principle of retribution.
2. According to the Code of Hammurabi, what was most highly valued in Mesopotamian society? What was the least valued? Explain your answers.
3. What is the guiding principle in the American criminal justice system? How does this compare with Hammurabi’s justice?
Egyptian Civilization: “The Gift of the Nile”

Main Ideas
• The Nile was crucial to the development of Egyptian civilization.
• Egyptian history is divided into three major periods.

Key Terms
dynasty, pharaoh, bureaucracy, vizier, mummification, hieroglyphics, hieratic script

People to Identify
Menes, Hyksos, Hatshepsut, Akhenaton, Tutankhamen, Ramses II, Cleopatra VII

Places to Locate
Nile River, Lower Egypt, Upper Egypt, Giza

Preview Questions
1. What was the “Black Land”?
2. Why were the pyramids built and how were they used?

Reading Strategy
Identifying As you read this section, complete a chart like the one below identifying the characteristics of the three major periods of Egyptian history.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Old Kingdom</th>
<th>The Middle Kingdom</th>
<th>The New Kingdom</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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The Nile was crucial to the development of Egyptian civilization.

“The Egyptian Nile,” wrote one Arab traveler, “surpasses all the rivers of the world in sweetness of taste, in length of course and usefulness. No other river in the world can show such a continuous series of towns and villages along its banks.” In their “Hymn to the Nile,” Egyptians wrote of their reliance on the river: “The bringer of food, rich in provisions, creator of all good, lord of majesty, sweet of fragrance... [The Nile] makes the granaries wide, and gives things to the poor. He who makes every beloved tree to grow.”

—Ancient Near Eastern Texts, James B. Pritchard, 1969

Voices from the Past

Egypt, like Mesopotamia, was one of the first river valley civilizations. Like the people of Mesopotamia, the Egyptians left records of their developing civilization.

The Impact of Geography

The Nile is a unique river, beginning in the heart of Africa and coursing northward for more than 4,000 miles (6,436 km). It is the longest river in the world. Before it empties into the Mediterranean, the Nile splits into two major branches. This split forms a triangular territory, the delta. The Nile Delta is called Lower Egypt; the land upstream, to the south, is called Upper Egypt. Egypt’s important cities developed at the tip of the delta, the point at which the Nile divides.
To the ancient Egyptians, the most important feature of the river was its yearly flooding—the “miracle” of the Nile. The river rose in the summer from heavy rains in central Africa, reached its highest point in Egypt in September and October, and left a deposit of mud that created an area of rich soil several miles wide on both sides of the river. The Egyptians called this fertile land, which was dark in color, the “Black Land.” Beyond these narrow strips of fertile fields lay the deserts, the “Red Land.”

The surpluses of food that the Egyptian farmers grew in the fertile Nile Valley made Egypt prosperous. The river also served as a unifying factor in Egyptian history. In ancient times, the Nile was the fastest way to travel through the land, making both transportation and communication easier. Winds from the north pushed sailboats south, and the current of the Nile carried them north.

Unlike Mesopotamia, which was subject to constant invasion, Egypt was blessed by natural barriers that gave it protection from invasion and a sense of security. These barriers included the deserts to the west and east; the Red Sea to the east; the cataracts (rapids) on the southern part of the Nile, which made defense relatively easy; and the Mediterranean Sea to the north.

The regularity of the Nile floods and the relative isolation of the Egyptians created a feeling of security and changelessness. To the ancient Egyptians, when the Nile flooded each year, “the fields laugh and people’s faces light up.” Unlike people in Mesopotamia, Egyptians faced life with a spirit of confidence in the stability of things. Ancient Egyptian civilization was marked by a remarkable degree of continuity over thousands of years.

Contrasting: Explain how flooding patterns of rivers in Egypt and Mesopotamia caused the two civilizations to develop differently.

The Importance of Religion

Religion, too, provided a sense of security and timelessness for the Egyptians. Actually, they had no word for religion. For them, religious ideas were an inseparable part of the entire world order. The Egyptians were polytheistic. They had a remarkable number of gods associated with heavenly bodies and natural forces. Two groups, sun gods and land gods, came to have special importance. Is that surprising in view of the importance to Egypt’s well-being of the sun and the fertile land along the banks of the Nile?

The sun, the source of life, was of course worthy of worship. The sun god took on different forms and names, depending on his specific role. He was worshiped as Atum in human form and also as Re, who had a human body but the head of a falcon. The Egyptian ruler took the title Son of Re, because he was seen as an earthly form of Re.

River and land gods included Osiris and Isis. A famous Egyptian myth told of the struggle between Osiris, who brought civilization to Egypt, and his evil brother Seth, who killed him, cut his body into 14 parts, and tossed the parts into the Nile. The pieces were found by Osiris’s wife, Isis. With help from other gods, Isis brought Osiris back to life.
Osiris took on an important role for the Egyptians as a symbol of resurrection. By identifying with Osiris, people could hope to gain new life, just as Osiris had done. The dead were placed in tombs (in the case of kings, in pyramid tombs); were given the name Osiris; and by a process of magical identification, became Osiris. Like Osiris, they would then be reborn. The flooding of the Nile and the new life it brought to Egypt were symbolized by Isis’s bringing all of Osiris’s parts together each spring in the festival of the new land.

**Examining**

What is the significance of the famous Egyptian myth of the struggle between Osiris and his evil brother Seth? Why did Osiris take on an important role for the Egyptians?

**The Course of Egyptian History**

Modern historians have divided Egyptian history into three major periods, known as the Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, and New Kingdom. These were periods of long-term stability marked by strong leadership, freedom from invasion, the building of temples and pyramids, and considerable intellectual and cultural activity. Between the periods of stability were ages of political chaos and invasion, known as the Intermediate periods.

The history of Egypt begins around 3100 B.C., when Menes (MEE•NEEZ) the king united the villages of Upper (southern) and Lower (northern) Egypt into a single kingdom and created the first Egyptian royal dynasty. A dynasty is a family of rulers whose right to rule is passed on within the family.

From then on, the Egyptian ruler would be called “King of Upper and Lower Egypt.” The royal crown would be a double crown, indicating the unity of all Egypt. Just as the Nile served to unite Upper Egypt and Lower Egypt physically, kingship united the two areas politically.

**The Old Kingdom** The Old Kingdom, which lasted from around 2700 to 2200 B.C., was an age of prosperity and splendor. Like the kings of the Sumerian city-states, the monarchs of the Old Kingdom were powerful rulers over a unified state. Among the various titles of Egyptian monarchs, that of pharaoh (originally meaning “great house” or “palace”) eventually became the most common.

Kingship was a divine institution in ancient Egypt and formed part of a universal cosmic order: “What is the king of Upper and Lower Egypt? He is a god by whose dealings one lives, the father and mother of all men, alone by himself, without an equal.” In obeying their pharaoh, subjects believed that they were helping to maintain a stable world order. A breakdown in royal power could only mean that citizens were offending the gods and weakening that order.

Egyptian pharaohs possessed absolute power—that is, they had complete, unlimited power to rule their people. Nevertheless, they had help in ruling.
At first, members of the pharaoh’s family aided in running the country. During the Old Kingdom, however, a government bureaucracy—an administrative organization with officials and regular procedures—developed. Especially important was the office of vizier, the “steward of the whole land.” Directly responsible to the pharaoh, the vizier was in charge of the government bureaucracy. In time, Egypt was divided into 42 provinces, which were run by governors appointed by the pharaoh. Each governor was responsible to the pharaoh and vizier.

The Pyramids One of the great achievements of Egyptian civilization, the building of pyramids, occurred in the time of the Old Kingdom. Pyramids were built as part of a larger complex of buildings dedicated to the dead—in effect, a city of the dead. The area included several structures: a large pyramid for the pharaoh’s burial; smaller pyramids for his family; and several mastabas, rectangular structures with flat roofs used as tombs for the pharaoh’s officials.

The tombs were well prepared for their residents. They contained rooms stocked with supplies, including chairs, boats, chests, weapons, games, dishes, and a variety of foods. The Egyptians believed that human beings had two bodies—a physical one and a spiritual one, which they called the ka. If the physical body was properly preserved and the tomb furnished with all the various objects of regular life, the ka could return. Surrounded by earthly comforts, the ka could then continue its life despite the death of the physical body.

To preserve the physical body after death, the Egyptians practiced mummification, a process of slowly drying a dead body to prevent it from rotting. This process took place in workshops run by priests, primarily for the wealthy families who could afford it. Workers first removed the liver, lungs, stomach, and intestines and placed them in four special jars that were put in the tomb with the mummy. The priests also removed the brain by extracting it through the nose. They then covered the corpse with a natural salt that absorbed the body’s water. Later, they filled the body with spices and wrapped it with layers of linen soaked in resin. At the end of the process, which had taken about 70 days, a lifelike mask was placed over the head and shoulders of the mummy. The mummy was then sealed in a case and placed in its tomb.
Pyramids were tombs for the mummified bodies of pharaohs. The largest and most magnificent of all the pyramids was built under King Khufu (KOO•FOO). Constructed at Giza around 2540 B.C., the famous Great Pyramid of King Khufu covers 13 acres (5.3 ha), measures 756 feet (230 m) at each side of its base, and stands 481 feet (147 m) high.

The building of the Great Pyramid was an enormous construction project. The Greek historian Herodotus reported the traditional story that it took 100,000 Egyptians 20 years to build the Great Pyramid. Herodotus wrote two thousand years after the event, however, and much speculation still surrounds the building of the Great Pyramid. Especially puzzling is how the builders achieved their amazing level of precision. The stone slabs on the outside of the Great Pyramid, for example, fit so closely side by side that even a hair cannot be pushed into the joints between them.

Guarding the Great Pyramid at Giza is a huge statue carved from rock, known as the Great Sphinx. This colossal statue is 240 feet (73 m) long and 66 feet (20 m) high. It has the body of a lion and a human head. The head is believed by many to be a likeness of Khufu’s son Khafre, who ordered the statue’s construction. Historians do not agree on the purpose of the Great Sphinx. Many Egyptians, however, believed that the mythical sphinx was an important guardian of sacred sites.

The Great Pyramid still stands as a visible symbol of the power of the Egyptian pharaohs of the Old Kingdom. No pyramid built later matched its size or splendor. The pyramid was not only the pharaoh’s tomb but also an important symbol of royal power. It could be seen for miles and served to remind people of the glory, might, and wealth of the ruler who was a living god on Earth.

**The Middle Kingdom** The Old Kingdom eventually collapsed, followed by a period of chaos that lasted about 150 years. Finally, a new royal dynasty gained control of all Egypt and began the Middle Kingdom, a period of stability lasting from about 2050 to 1652 B.C. Egyptians later portrayed the Middle Kingdom as a golden age—an age of stability.

As evidence of its newfound strength, Egypt began a period of expansion. Nubia, which was located south of Egypt, was conquered. Fortresses were built to protect the new southern frontier. The government sent armies into Palestine and Syria, although they did not remain there. Pharaohs also sent traders to Kush, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Crete.

One feature of the Middle Kingdom was a new concern of the pharaohs for the people. In the Old Kingdom, the pharaoh had been seen as a god-king far removed from his people. Now he was portrayed as the shepherd of his people and expected to build public works and provide for the public welfare. Pharaohs of the Middle Kingdom undertook a number of helpful projects. The draining of swampland in the Nile Delta provided thousands of acres of new farmland. The digging of a canal to connect the Nile to the Red Sea aided trade and transportation.

**The New Kingdom** The Middle Kingdom came to an end around 1652 B.C. with the invasion of Egypt
Hatshepsut—the first woman to become pharaoh—built a great temple at Deir el Bahri, near Thebes. Hatshepsut was succeeded by her nephew, Thutmose III. He led 17 military campaigns into Syria and Palestine and even reached the Euphrates River. His forces occupied Palestine and Syria and moved westward into Libya. Magnificent new buildings and temples were constructed to show the greatness of the empire.

The New Kingdom was not without troubles, however. The pharaoh Amenhotep IV introduced the worship of Aton, god of the sun disk, as the sole god. Amenhotep changed his own name to Akhenaton (“It is well with Aton”) and closed the temples of other gods. In a society that had always been tolerant of many gods, Akhenaton’s actions in destroying the new temples.

by a group of people from western Asia known to the Egyptians as the Hyksos (HIK•SAHS). The Hyksos used horse-drawn war chariots and overwhelmed the Egyptian soldiers, who fought from donkey carts.

For almost a hundred years, the Hyksos ruled much of Egypt. The conquered Egyptians learned a great deal, however, from their conquerors. From the Hyksos, the Egyptians learned to use bronze in the making of their farming tools and their weapons. The Egyptians also mastered many of the military skills of the Hyksos, especially the use of horse-drawn war chariots.

Eventually, a new dynasty of pharaohs used the new weapons to drive out the Hyksos and reunite Egypt. The New Kingdom was established and lasted approximately from 1567 to 1085 B.C. This reunification launched the Egyptians along a new militaristic path. During the period of the New Kingdom, Egypt created an empire and became the most powerful state in Southwest Asia.

Massive wealth boosted the power of the New Kingdom pharaohs. The Egyptian rulers showed their wealth by building new temples. Hatshepsut—one of the first women to become pharaoh—built a great temple at Deir el Bahri, near Thebes. Hatshepsut was succeeded by her nephew, Thutmose III. He led 17 military campaigns into Syria and Palestine and even reached the Euphrates River. His forces occupied Palestine and Syria and moved westward into Libya. Magnificent new buildings and temples were constructed to show the greatness of the empire.

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### Geography Skills

Egypt began a period of commercial and military expansion during the Middle Kingdom that would bring the country stability and wealth until the New Kingdom collapsed in 1085 B.C.

1. **Interpreting Maps** Analyze the patterns of movement for the armies and traders. Explain why they diverge at the Mediterranean Sea.

2. **Applying Geography Skills** Explain how Egypt’s location would have been an asset to its expansion, as well as a liability contributing to its downfall.

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**HISTORY Online**

**Web Activity**
Visit the Glencoe World History Web site at wh.glencoe.com and click on Chapter 2—Student Web Activity to learn more about Egypt.
Hatshepsut

Ruled 1503–1482 B.C.  
Egyptian pharaoh

Hatshepsut was the daughter of the pharaoh Thutmose I. She married her half-brother, who became the pharaoh Thutmose II. When he died, Hatshepsut assumed the full power of pharaoh. Statues show Hatshepsut clothed and bearded as a king would be. She was addressed as “His Majesty.”

Hatshepsut’s reign was a prosperous one. She is best known for the temple dedicated to herself at Deir el Bahri on the west bank of the Nile at Thebes. One of the inscriptions she had placed there reads: “Now my heart turns to and fro, in thinking what will the people say, they who shall see my monument in later years, and shall speak of what I have done.”
Daily Life in Ancient Egypt

Ancient Egyptians had a very positive attitude toward daily life on Earth. They married young (girls at 12 and boys at 14) and established homes and families. Monogamy (marriage to one person) was the general rule, although a husband was allowed to keep additional wives if his first wife was childless.

The husband was master in the house, but wives were very well respected. Wives were in charge of the household and the education of the children. From a book of wise sayings (which the Egyptians called “instructions”) came this advice: “If you are a man of standing, you should love your wife at home as is fitting. Fill her belly; clothe her back. . . . Make her heart glad as long as you live.” (See page 990 to read excerpts from Vizier Ptah-hotep’s An Egyptian Father’s Advice to His Son in the Primary Sources Library.)

Women’s property and inheritance stayed in their hands, even in marriage. Although most careers and public offices were closed to women, some women did operate businesses. Peasant women, of course, worked long hours in the fields and at numerous tasks in the home. Upper-class women could become priestesses, and four queens became pharaohs.

Parents arranged marriages for their children. Their chief concerns were family and property. The chief purpose of marriage was to produce children, especially sons. Only sons could carry on the family name. Daughters were not ignored, however, and numerous tomb paintings show the close and affectionate relationship parents had with both sons and daughters. Although marriages were arranged, the surviving love poems from ancient Egypt suggest that some marriages included an element of romance. Egyptian marriages could and did end in divorce. It included compensation for the wife.

Reading Check Identifying What were the primary responsibilities of a wife in an Egyptian home?

Writing and Education

Writing in Egypt emerged around 3000 B.C. The Greeks later called this earliest Egyptian writing hieroglyphics, meaning “priest-carvings” or “sacred writings.” The hieroglyphic system of writing, which used both pictures and more abstract forms, was complex. Learning and practicing it took much time and skill. Hieroglyphic script was used for writing on temple walls and in tombs. A highly simplified version of hieroglyphics, known as hieratic script, came into being. It used the same principles as hieroglyphic writing, but the drawings were simplified by using dashes, strokes, and curves to represent them. Hieratic script was used for business transactions, record keeping, and the general needs of daily life.

Egyptian hieroglyphs were at first carved in stone. Later, hieratic script was written on papyrus, a paper made from the papyrus reed that grew along the Nile. Most of the ancient Egyptian literature that has come down to us was written on rolls of papyrus.

The Egyptian scribes were masters of the art of writing and also its teachers. At the age of 10, boys of the upper classes went to schools run by scribes. Training to be a scribe took many years. Students learned to read and write by copying texts. Discipline was strict, as is evident from the following Egyptian saying: “A boy’s ears are on his back. He listens only when he is beaten.” Girls remained at home and learned housekeeping skills from their mothers.

Reading Check Contrasting What are the differences between hieroglyphics and hieratic script?

Achievements in Art and Science

Pyramids, temples, and other monuments bear witness to the architectural and artistic achievements of the Egyptians. Artists and sculptors were expected to follow particular formulas in style. This gave
Comparing Life in Mesopotamia and Egypt

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geography</th>
<th>Mesopotamia</th>
<th>Egypt</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rivers</td>
<td>Fertile Crescent</td>
<td>Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Southwest Asia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Natural Barriers</td>
<td>Flat plains</td>
<td>Deserts,</td>
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<td>seas,</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>cataracts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Polytheistic</td>
<td>Polytheistic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>City-states; theocracy; large bureaucracy; kings ruled</td>
<td>Rural villages; dynasties; divine kings ruled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Structure</td>
<td>Nobles, commoners, slaves</td>
<td>Upper classes, merchants, artisans, peasants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economy</td>
<td>Farming and trade</td>
<td>Farming and trade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written Language</td>
<td>Cuneiform</td>
<td>Hieroglyphics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ancient civilizations thrived in both Mesopotamia and Egypt.

1. **Making Comparisons** Create a map of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Develop icons to illustrate the differences and similarities in the cultures.

2. **Evaluating** How did geographical differences influence the development of these cultures?

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Egyptian art a distinctive look for thousands of years. For example, the human body was often portrayed as a combination of profile, semiprofile, and frontal view to accurately represent each part.

Egyptians also made advances in mathematics. Mathematics helped them in building their massive monuments. Egyptians were able to calculate area and volume and used geometry to survey flooded land.

The Egyptians developed an accurate 365-day calendar by basing their year not only on the movements of the moon, but also the bright star Sirius.

Sirius rises in the sky just before the annual flooding of the Nile River.

The practice of embalming (preserving a dead body to protect it from decay) led to medical expertise in human anatomy. Archeologists have recovered directions from doctors for using splints, bandages, and compresses for treating fractures, wounds, and disease. Other ancient civilizations acquired medical knowledge from the Egyptians.

**Reading Check**

**Describing** What was distinctive about Egyptian art?
New Centers of Civilization

According to the biblical account, it was during the flight from Egypt, where they had been enslaved, that the Israelites made a covenant with God:

"And God spoke all these words, 'I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. . . . You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal.'"

—Exodus 20:1–17

Obedience to God’s law, the Ten Commandments, became an important aspect of the Jewish religious tradition.

The Role of Nomadic Peoples

Our story of civilization so far has focused on Mesopotamia and Egypt. Only recently have archaeologists discovered what they believe is another ancient civilization that flourished in central Asia (in what are now the republics of Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan) around 4,000 years ago. People in this civilization built mud-brick buildings, raised sheep and goats, had bronze tools, and used a system of irrigation to grow wheat and barley. Recently discovered inscriptions show that these early people may have had writing.
On the fringes of these civilizations lived nomadic peoples who depended on hunting and gathering, herding, and sometimes farming for their survival. Most important were the pastoral nomads who on occasion overran settled communities and created their own empires. Pastoral nomads domesticated animals for both food and clothing. They moved along regular migratory routes to provide steady sources of nourishment for their animals.

People who lived in settled communities often viewed nomadic peoples as hostile and barbaric, or uncivilized. The two types of groups did interact, however. Nomads traded animals and animal products for grains and vegetables they were unable to grow. Pastoral nomads also aided long-distance trade by carrying products between civilized centers. In this way, nomads often passed on new technological developments, such as the use of bronze and iron, that provided new sources of strength to the old civilizations. When the normal patterns of the pastoral nomads were disrupted by drought or overpopulation, however, they often attacked the civilized communities to obtain relief.

The Indo-Europeans were one of the most important nomadic peoples. The term Indo-European refers to a particular group of people who used a language derived from a single parent tongue. Indo-European languages include Greek, Latin, Persian, Sanskrit, and the Germanic languages. The original Indo-European peoples were probably based somewhere in the steppe region north of the Black Sea or in Southwest Asia. Around 2000 B.C. they began to move into Europe, India, and western Asia. One group of Indo-Europeans moved into Asia Minor and Anatolia around 1750 B.C. and combined with the native peoples to form the Hittite kingdom with its capital at Hattusha (Bogazköy in modern Turkey).

Between 1600 and 1200 B.C., the Hittites created their own empire in western Asia and even threatened the power of the Egyptians. The Hittites were the first of the Indo-European peoples to make use of iron. This technology enabled them to use weapons that were stronger and cheaper to make because of the widespread availability of iron ore. Around 1200 B.C., however, new waves of invaders known to historians only as the “Sea Peoples” destroyed the Hittite Empire.

The end of the Hittite kingdom and the weakening of Egypt around 1200 B.C. temporarily left no dominant powers in western Asia. This allowed a number of small kingdoms and city-states to emerge, especially in the area of Syria and Palestine. The Phoenicians were one of these peoples.

Reading Check
Identifying Who were the first Indo-Europeans to make use of iron?

The Phoenicians

The Phoenicians lived in the area of Palestine along the Mediterranean coast on a narrow band of land 120 miles (193 km) long. After the downfall of the Hittites and the Egyptians, the newfound

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hebrew, Phoenician, and Latin Alphabets</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Hebrew</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Phoenician</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Imperial Latin</strong></td>
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</table>

Imperial Latin did not distinguish between I and J or between V and U. There was no W. Y and Z were introduced after 100 B.C. for foreign words only.

Many civilizations developed their own alphabets.

1. **Comparing** What similarities do you see among the three alphabets shown here?
political independence of the Phoenicians helped them expand their trade. Trade had long been the basis of Phoenician prosperity. The chief cities of Phoenicia—Byblos, Tyre, and Sidon—were ports on the eastern Mediterranean. The Phoenicians produced a number of goods for foreign markets, including purple dye, glass, and lumber from the cedar forests of Lebanon.

The Phoenicians improved their ships, became great international sea traders, and thus created a trade empire. They charted new routes not only in the Mediterranean but also in the Atlantic Ocean, where they reached Britain and sailed south along the west coast of Africa. The Phoenicians set up a number of colonies in the western Mediterranean. Carthage, their most famous colony, was located on the North African coast.

The Phoenician culture is best known for its alphabet. The Phoenicians, who spoke a Semitic language, simplified their writing by using 22 different signs to represent the sounds of their speech. These 22 characters, or letters, could be used to spell out all the words in the Phoenician language. Although the Phoenicians were not the only people to invent an alphabet, theirs was important because it was eventually passed on to the Greeks. From the Greek alphabet was derived the Roman alphabet that we still use today.

Reading Check

Identifying

What was the most significant cultural invention of the Phoenicians?

Geography Skills

After King Solomon died, the Kingdom of Israel was divided into two separate kingdoms—Israel and Judah.

1. Interpreting Maps When Israel was divided into two kingdoms, which kingdom lost access to the Mediterranean?

2. Applying Geography Skills Why did the Phoenicians not develop into an agricultural society?
Conflict in Palestine

Conflict in Southwest Asia has a long history. When the Israelites entered Palestine, around 1220 B.C., other peoples were already settled there. One of these peoples was the Philistines. For over two centuries, Israelites and Philistines fought for control.

By 1020 B.C., the Israelites found themselves on the verge of being conquered by the Philistines. The Israelites decided to give up their loose tribal organization, choosing to unite behind one of their members, Saul, who became king.

At first, Saul and the small army he organized were successful. Around 1000 B.C., however, when they dared to meet the Philistines on an open plain, Saul and his army were defeated.

David, the next king of the Israelites, defeated the Philistines and established control over all of Palestine. Although later the Israelites would be conquered and scattered, Palestine remained the Promised Land in the minds of many Jews.

The United Kingdom

By the time of King Solomon, who ruled from about 970 to 930 B.C., the Israelites had established control over all of Palestine and made Jerusalem into the capital of Israel. Solomon greatly strengthened royal power. He expanded the government and army and encouraged trade. Solomon is best known for building a temple in the city of Jerusalem. The Israelites viewed the temple as the symbolic center of their religion and of the Israelite kingdom itself. Under Solomon, ancient Israel was at the height of its power.

King Solomon was also known for his wisdom. Once, two women brought a child before him, each claiming that she was the child’s mother. Solomon ordered his servant to cut the child in half, giving one half to each woman. The first woman objected: “Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don’t kill him!” The second woman replied, “Neither I nor you shall have him. Cut him in two!” Then Solomon said: “Give the baby to the first woman. Do not kill him; she is his mother.” According to the biblical account, “When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice.”

The Divided Kingdom

After Solomon’s death, tension between the northern and southern tribes within Israel led to the creation of two separate kingdoms. The Kingdom of Israel was composed of the ten northern tribes and had its capital at Samaria. To the south, the Kingdom of Judah consisted of two tribes and had its capital at Jerusalem.

In 722 B.C., the Assyrians overran the Kingdom of Israel and sent many Israelites to other parts of the Assyrian Empire. These scattered Israelites (the “ten lost tribes”) merged with neighboring peoples and gradually lost their identity.

In 1948, the independent Jewish state of Israel was established in Palestine. More than two-thirds of the people there were Arab Muslims who were not eager to be governed by the Israelis. Arab neighbors of the new state were outraged. In 1964, an Arab organization called the Palestine Liberation Organization was founded to bring about an independent Arab state of Palestine. Conflict between Arabs and Israelis over Palestine continues to this day.
The Kingdom of Judah managed to retain its independence for a while, but a new enemy soon appeared on the horizon. The Chaldeans (kal•DEE•uhnez) defeated Assyria, conquered the Kingdom of Judah, and completely destroyed Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Many upper-class people of Judah were sent as captives to Babylonia. The memory of their exile is evoked in the words of Psalm 137:

"By the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept when we remembered Zion. . . . How can we sing the songs of the Lord while in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget its skill. May my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth if I do not remember you, if I do not consider Jerusalem my highest joy."

The Babylonian captivity of the people of Judah did not last. A new set of conquerors, the Persians, destroyed the Chaldean kingdom and allowed the people of Judah to return to Jerusalem and rebuild their city and temple. The revived Kingdom of Judah remained under Persian control until the conquests of Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C. The people of Judah survived, eventually becoming known as the Jews and giving their name to Judaism. The Babylonian captivity had changed Judaism. It became a stateless religion based on the belief that God was not fixed to one particular land but instead was Creator and Lord of the whole world.

**The Spiritual Dimensions of Israel** According to Jewish beliefs, there is but one God, called Yahweh (YAH•WAY), the Creator of the world and everything in it. In the Jews’ view, God ruled the world; all peoples were his servants, whether they knew it or not. God had created nature but was not in nature. The stars, moon, rivers, wind, and other natural phenomena were not gods, as other ancient peoples believed, but God’s handiwork. All of God’s creations could be admired for their awesome beauty, but not worshipped as gods.

This powerful creator, however, was not removed from the life he had created. God was just and good, and he expected goodness from his people. If they did not obey his will, they would be punished. However, he was also a God of mercy and love: “The Lord...
is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; he has compassion on all he has made.” Each person could have a personal relationship with this powerful being.

The Jews were monotheistic; they believed in one God. The covenant, law, and prophets were three aspects of the Jewish religious tradition. The Jews believed that during the exodus from Egypt, when Moses led his people out of bondage toward the promised land, God made a covenant, or contract, with them. Yahweh promised to guide them if they obeyed the law of God stated in the Ten Commandments. According to the Bible, Yahweh gave these commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai.

The Jews believed that certain religious teachers, called prophets, were sent by God to serve as his voice to his people. The following selection from the biblical book of Isaiah makes clear the prophets’ belief that unjust actions would bring God’s punishment.

**The Lord enters into judgment against the elders and leaders of his people:** ‘It is you who have ruined my vineyard; the plunder from the poor is in your houses. What do you mean by crushing my people and grinding the faces of the poor?’ declares the Lord, the Lord Almighty. The Lord says, ‘The women of Zion in the hands of the mother, especially in regard to basic moral principles.

As boys matured, their fathers took over responsibility for their education, which remained largely informal. This included religious instruction as well as a general education for life. Since trades were usually hereditary, fathers also chose trades for their sons. As one rabbi stated, “He who does not teach his son a useful trade is bringing him up to be a thief.”

Additional education for boys came from teachers whose sacred mission was to instruct boys in the Torah, the first five books of the Bible. An organized school system was not established until much later, possibly in the second century B.C. The education girls received was from their mothers, who taught them the basic fundamentals of how to be good wives, mothers, and housekeepers.

The age of prophecy lasted from the eleventh to the fifth centuries B.C., during the time when the people of Israel and Judah faced threats or endured conquests by powerful neighbors. The prophets declared that faithlessness to God would bring punishment and catastrophe, but that turning from evil would bring God’s mercy.

From the prophets came new concepts that enriched the Jewish tradition. Later prophets, such as Isaiah, embraced a concern for all humanity. All nations would someday come to the God of Israel. This vision included the end of war and the establishment of peace for all the nations of the world. In the words of the prophet Isaiah:

**Scribes in ancient Israel carefully copied the Torah by hand.**

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**Connecting to the Past**

1. **Compare and Contrast** Compare the upbringing and education of the eldest son in an Israelite family to that of an eldest daughter.

2. **Writing about History** “The primary goal of marriage in ancient Israel was to produce children.” Explain why this might be. Do you think the primary goal of marriage is the same today?
He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many people. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

The prophets also cried out against social injustice. They condemned the rich for causing the poor to suffer. They denounced luxuries as worthless, and they threatened Israel with prophecies of dire punishments for these sins. They said that God’s command was to live justly, share with one’s neighbors, care for the poor and the unfortunate, and act with compassion. When God’s command was not followed, according to the prophets, the community was threatened. These words of the prophets became a source for universal ideals of social justice.

The religion of Israel was unique among the religions of western Asia and Egypt. The most dramatic difference was the Jewish belief that there is only one God for all peoples (monotheism). In all other religions at that time, only priests (and some rulers) had access to the gods. In the Jewish tradition, God’s wishes, though communicated to the people through prophets, had all been written down. No spiritual leader could claim that he alone knew God’s will. This knowledge was open to anyone who could read the Torah.

Although the prophets developed a concern for all humanity, the demands of Judaism—the need to obey God—encouraged a separation between Jews and their non-Jewish neighbors. Unlike most other peoples of Southwest Asia, Jews would not accept the gods of their conquerors or neighbors and be made part of another community. To remain faithful to the demands of God, they might even have to refuse loyalty to political leaders.

Identifying Which aspect of the Israelite culture had the greatest impact on Western civilization?
The Rise of New Empires

Main Ideas
- The Hittites and Egyptians were eventually overshadowed by the rise of the Assyrian and Persian Empires.
- The Persian Empire brought many years of peace to Southwest Asia, increasing trade and the general well being of its peoples.

Key Terms
seraply, satrap, monarchy

Preview of Events

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>700 B.C.</td>
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<td>200 B.C.</td>
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<td>100 B.C.</td>
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<tr>
<td>559 B.C.</td>
<td>Cyrus rules, Persian Empire</td>
<td>Babylon falls</td>
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<tr>
<td>539 B.C.</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>330s B.C.</td>
<td>Alexander the Great conquers the Persian Empire</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

People to Identify
Assyrians, Nebuchadnezzar, Persians, Cyrus, Darius, Immortals, Zoroaster

Places to Locate
Assyrian Empire, Persian Empire, Royal Road

Preview Questions
1. What caused the downfall of the Assyrian Empire?
2. Why did the people of his time call Cyrus “the Great”?

Reading Strategy
Compare and Contrast
Prepare a Venn diagram listing the characteristics of the Assyrian Empire and the characteristics of the Persian Empire. Identify the similarities and differences of both empires.

Voices from the Past

Darius, one of the rulers of the Persian Empire, described the divine source of his power:

“A great god is Ahuramazda [god of the Persians], who created this earth, who created man, who made Darius king, one king of many, one lord of many. I am Darius the Great King, King of Kings, King of countries containing all kinds of men, King in this great earth far and wide. I am king. This which has been done, all that by the will of Ahuramazda I did.”

—Old Persian: Grammar, Texts, Lexicon, R.G. Kent, 1953

A small and independent Hebrew state could exist only as long as no larger state dominated western Asia. New empires soon arose, however, that conquered vast stretches of the ancient world.

The Assyrian Empire

The first of the new empires was formed in Assyria, located on the upper Tigris River. The Assyrians were a Semitic-speaking people who exploited the use of iron weapons to establish an empire by 700 B.C. The Assyrian Empire included Mesopotamia, parts of the Iranian Plateau, sections of Asia Minor, Syria, Palestine, and Egypt down to Thebes. Within less than a hundred years, however, internal strife and resentment of Assyrian rule began to tear the Assyrian Empire apart.
In 612 B.C., the empire fell to a coalition of Chaldeans and Medes (people who lived in the East), and was divided between those two powers.

At its height, the Assyrian Empire was ruled by kings whose power was seen as absolute. Under their leadership, the Assyrian Empire came to be well organized. Local officials were directly responsible to the king. The Assyrians also developed an efficient system of communication to administer their empire. A network of posts was established throughout the empire that used relays of horses to carry messages. The system was so effective that a governor anywhere in the empire could send a question and receive an answer from the king within a week. One of the world’s first libraries was established at Nineveh by Ashurbanipal, one of the last Assyrian kings. This library has provided abundant information concerning ancient Southwest Asian civilizations.

The Assyrians were good at conquering others. Over many years of practice, they developed effective military leaders and fighters. The Assyrian army was large, well organized, and disciplined. A force of infantrymen was its core, joined by cavalrymen and horse-drawn war chariots that were used as platforms for shooting arrows. Moreover, the Assyrians had the first large armies equipped with iron weapons.

The Assyrians used terror as an instrument of warfare. They regularly laid waste to the land in which they were fighting. They smashed dams; looted and destroyed towns; set crops on fire; and cut down trees, particularly fruit trees. The Assyrians were especially known for committing atrocities on their captives. King Ashurnasirpal recorded this account of his treatment of prisoners: “3,000 of their combat troops I felled with weapons. . . . Many I took alive; from some of these I cut off their hands to the wrist, from others I cut off their noses, ears and fingers; I put out the eyes of many of the soldiers. . . . I burned their young men and women to death.”

The Assyrians were so successful at conquering others?

The Persian Empire

After the collapse of the Assyrian Empire, the Chaldeans, under their king Nebuchadnezzar (NEH•byuh•kuhd•NEH•zuhr) II, made Babylonia the leading state in western Asia. Nebuchadnezzar rebuilt Babylon as the center of his empire and gave it a reputation as one of the great cities of the ancient world. However, the splendor of Chaldean Babylonia proved to be short-lived. Babylon fell to the Persians in 539 B.C.

The Rise of the Persian Empire The Persians were an Indo-European people who lived in what is today southwestern Iran. Primarily nomadic, the Persians were organized in groups until one family managed to unify them. One of the family’s members, Cyrus, created a powerful Persian state that stretched from Asia Minor to western India.

Cyrus ruled from 559 to 530 B.C. In 539 B.C., he entered Mesopotamia and captured Babylon. His treatment of Babylonia showed remarkable restraint and wisdom. Cyrus also issued an edict permitting the Jews, who had been brought to Babylon in the sixth century B.C., to return to Jerusalem.

The people of his time called Cyrus “the Great.” Indeed, he must have been an unusual ruler for his time, a man who demonstrated much wisdom and compassion in the conquest and organization of his empire. Unlike the Assyrian rulers, Cyrus had a reputation for mercy. Medes, Babylonians, and Jews all accepted him as their ruler. Cyrus had a genuine respect for other civilizations. In building his palaces,
for example, he made use of Assyrian, Babylonian, and Egyptian designs and building methods.

Cyrus’s successors extended the territory of the Persian Empire. His son Cambyses (kam•BY•SEEZ) successfully invaded Egypt. Darius, who ruled from 521 to 486 B.C., added a new Persian province in western India that extended to the Indus River. He then moved into Europe, conquering Thrace and creating the largest empire the world had yet seen. Darius’s contact with the Greeks led him to undertake an invasion of the Greek mainland (see Chapter 4).

The Structure of the Persian Empire Darius strengthened the Persian government. He divided the empire into 20 provinces, called satrapies (SAY•truhs•pees). Each province was ruled by a governor, or satrap, literally a “protector of the kingdom.” Each satrap collected taxes, provided justice and security, and recruited soldiers for the royal army.

An efficient system of communication was crucial to sustaining the Persian Empire. Well-maintained roads made it easy for officials to travel through the empire. The Royal Road stretched from Lydia to Susa, the chief capital of the empire. Like the Assyrians, the Persians set up way stations that provided food and shelter, as well as fresh horses, for the king’s messengers.

In this vast system, the Persian king—the “Great King”—occupied an exalted position. The Great King held the power of life and death.
At its height, much of the power of the Persian Empire and its rulers depended upon the military. By the time of Darius, the Persian kings had created a standing army of professional soldiers. This army was composed of people from all over the empire. At its core was a cavalry force of ten thousand and an elite infantry force of ten thousand. These groups were known as the Immortals because their numbers were never allowed to fall below ten thousand. When one member was killed, he was immediately replaced.

The Fall of the Persian Empire After Darius, the Persian kings became more and more isolated at their courts, surrounded by luxuries provided by the immense quantities of gold and silver that flowed into their treasuries. As the Persian kings increased taxes to gain more wealth, loyalty to the empire declined. Struggles over the throne weakened the monarchy (rule by a king or queen).

Persian kings had many wives and many children. For example, Artaxerxes (AHR•tuh•ZUHRK•SEEZ) II, who ruled in the fourth century B.C., had 115 sons. The sons had little real power, which only encouraged them to engage in plots to gain the throne. Of the nine rulers after Darius, six were murdered as a result of such plots. Xerxes II, for example, reigned for only 45 days before being murdered in bed by his half-brother. The assassin was soon killed by another half-brother. Over a period of time, this bloody struggle for the throne weakened the empire and led to its conquest by the Greek ruler Alexander the Great during the 330s B.C.

Persian Religion Of all the Persians’ cultural contributions, the most original was their religion, Zoroastrianism (ZOHR•uh•WAS•tree•uh•NIH•zuhm). According to Persian tradition, Zoroaster was born in 660 B.C. After a period of wandering and solitude, he had visions that caused him to be revered as a prophet of the “true religion.” His teachings were eventually written down in the Zend Avesta, the sacred book of Zoroastrianism.

Like the Jews, the followers of Zoroaster were monotheistic. To Zoroaster, Ahuramazda (the “Wise Lord”) was the supreme god who brought all things into being. Ahuramazda was supreme, but he was not unopposed. At the beginning of the world, the good spirit of Ahuramazda was opposed by the evil spirit known as Ahriman.

Humans also played a role in the struggle between good and evil. Ahuramazda, the creator, gave all humans the freedom to choose between right and wrong. The good person chooses the right way of Ahuramazda. Zoroaster taught that there would be an end to the struggle between good and evil. Ahuramazda would eventually triumph; and at the last judgment at the end of the world, the final separation of good and evil would occur.
Understanding Cause and Effect

Why Learn This Skill?
It is important to understand how or why an event occurred. What action or situation caused a particular event? What were the effects or consequences of that particular action or situation?

Learning the Skill
Understanding cause and effect involves considering how or why an event occurred. A cause is the action or situation that produces an event. An effect is the result or consequence of an action or situation. To identify cause-and-effect relationships, follow these steps:

- Identify two or more events or developments.
- Decide whether or not one event caused the other. Look for “clue words” such as because, led to, brought about, produced, as a result of, so that, since, and therefore.
- Identify the outcomes of events.

Making a graphic organizer can help you understand cause and effect. Study the graphic organizer on this page, and then read the passage below.

Unlike the floods on Mesopotamia’s rivers, the flooding of the Nile was gradual and predictable. The river was seen as life-giving, not life-threatening. Whereas massive, state-controlled irrigation and flood control were needed in Mesopotamia, the small villages along the Nile easily managed small irrigation systems that required no state assistance. As a result, Egyptian civilization tended to remain more rural. Many small villages were gathered along a narrow band of land on both sides of the Nile.

Practicing the Skill
On a separate piece of paper, make a cause-and-effect diagram for each of the following statements. Some of the statements may have more than one cause and effect.

1. Irrigation and drainage ditches made it possible to grow crops on a regular basis. The resulting abundance of food supplies enabled large numbers of people to live together in cities.
2. Under Hammurabi’s code, a son found guilty of striking his father had his hand cut off.
3. Akhenaton’s actions in destroying the old gods meant destruction of Egypt itself. The upheavals associated with his religious revolution led to a loss of Egypt’s empire.

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Using Key Terms
1. A Sumerian stepped tower is called a ______.
2. In a ______ society, women have fewer privileges and rights than men.
3. The Sumerians invented a system of writing called ______.
4. The Persian ruler Darius divided his empire into provinces called ______, which were ruled by ______.
5. The basic units of Sumerian civilization were ______.
6. If ruling power is passed from one generation to the next, the government of a country could be called a ______.
7. The belief in one god, rather than many gods, is called ______.
8. If citizens believe their city is ruled by gods, they might call their government a ______.
9. To preserve the physical body after death, the Egyptians used a process called ______.
10. A ______ was a government official directly responsible to the Pharaoh.
11. ______ script was used for business transactions and record keeping.
12. An administrative organization with officials and regular procedures is known as a ______.

Reviewing Key Facts
13. Government List four examples of the kinds of laws found in Hammurabi's code.
14. Geography How was the spring flooding of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers both beneficial and harmful?
15. Culture Which two groups of gods were most important to the Egyptians?
16. Science and Technology When was the wheel invented? Explain at least one way in which the invention of the wheel affected the Mesopotamian economy.
17. History What people created the first Mesopotamian civilization? What did they contribute to early civilization?
18. History Name at least four reasons why the Assyrians were good at conquering others.
19. Government What were the main powers and responsibilities of a Sumerian king?
20. Geography List three reasons why the Nile was crucial to the development of Egyptian civilization.
21. Culture What religion began in the Persian Empire? How was it similar to the Jewish religion?
22. Science and Technology Who were the first Indo-Europeans to use iron? In what way was the use of iron advantageous to this group of people?

Chapter Summary
Below are examples of how peoples discussed in Chapter 2 utilized their environment and invented new technologies.

Environment
- Egypt uses floodwaters for farming.
- Phoenicia sets up a trading empire on the sea.
- Mesopotamia creates irrigation and flood control systems.

Cooperation
- Assyria develops an empire-wide communication system.
- Mesopotamia builds temples and houses for religious leaders.
- Palestine adheres to sacred law to maintain separateness.

Cultural Diffusion
- Assyria acquires iron making from the Hittites.
- Persia acquires architecture from the Assyrians, Babylonians, and Egyptians.
- Egypt acquires bronze making from the Hyksos.

Innovation
- Mesopotamia invents the arch, dome, wheel, and a system of writing.
- Phoenicia invents an alphabet.
- Persia creates a standing army.
Making Decisions
31. Imagine you are the king’s adviser in a newly created empire without a reliable communication system. Explain what potential problems this poses and suggest a solution using the Assyrian and Persian communication networks as models. Include the costs and benefits of your system.

32. Research different interpretations of why the Great Sphinx was built and its purpose, or develop one of your own. Why do historians sometimes arrive at different conclusions? How might these differences be reconciled?

Critical Thinking
23. Comparing and Contrasting Compare and contrast the basic levels of government in the United States today with the Sumerian political structure. What advantages or disadvantages can you identify for each system?
24. Analyzing Analyze how the Jewish religion was different from religions of other cultures. How did these differences affect the ways Jews interacted with other peoples?
25. Interpreting Restate in your own words the meaning of William Loftus’s phrase, “the cradle of civilization.”
26. Making Generalizations Identify two projects undertaken by the Egyptians at the direction of Middle Kingdom pharaohs. Explain how these projects would have affected the Egyptian economy.

Writing About History
27. Expository Writing Imagine that you are a religious scholar examining world religions. Prepare a speech explaining why the Israelites adopted monotheism, while the Egyptian religion was based on polytheism.

Analyzing Sources
Read the following Mesopotamian poem.

The rampant flood which no man can oppose,
Which shakes the heavens and causes earth to tremble,
In an appalling blanket folds mother and child,
And drowns the harvest in its time of ripeness.

28. How does this poem represent the importance of the physical environment and religion in the lives of the Mesopotamians?
29. Explain the significance of the line: “Which shakes the heavens and causes earth to tremble.”

Applying Technology Skills
30. Using the Internet Search the Internet for the e-mail address of an Egyptologist from an international museum or university. Compose a letter requesting information about aspects of ancient Egyptian culture such as architecture, religion, or hieroglyphics.

How did geography influence both Egypt and Sumeria?
F Geography provided natural borders for protecting these civilizations.
G Floods from nearby rivers irrigated crops.
H Challenges helped people unite and work together.
J The flooding rivers caused people to have a dark outlook on the world.

Test-Taking Tip: This question asks for an example of how geography influenced history. Eliminate any answer choices that do not mention anything about geography or geographic features. Then study the map thoroughly and choose from the answer choices that remain.